

FOUR THOUSAND MILES.

A California Barge Drifts to the Marshall Islands.

On one of the coral reefs off the Marshall group, far away in the South Pacific, there rests a large railway transfer barge, which was carried by winds and currents from some point on the California coast to its present resting place. Its ownership, home port and the date of its loss are unknown, but there it is, and it drifted from some point on the California coast. John Crowley, mate of the missionary brig Morning Star, who arrived at San Francisco from Honolulu on the Australia on a vacation trip, saw the barge, and gives the proofs of its identity as far as it can be traced.

Speaking about the barge Crowley said: "Its very presence was unusual in that far-away clime, and our curiosity was aroused at once. I made a careful examination of it, but the only marks of identification on it were the word 'Transfer,' and the abbreviation 'Cal.' The rest of the name and the port had been obliterated, but enough remained to show that the barge came from California.

"There were narrow-gauge tracks on it, and a couple of big cranes still intact and very well preserved. The barge itself was pretty badly weather beaten and showed the marks of many a storm, but it was still in very good condition. It was about 150 feet long, built of heavy timbers securely fastened together, and was able to resist the power of the sea in its long drift. The bottom had been copper covered, but the natives stripped that off. They had made an attempt to break the craft up, too, but that was beyond their power, as they lacked all appliances to accomplish their object.

"The experiences of that barge would be hard to conjecture. It may have drifted the 4000 odd miles which divide our coast and the Marshalls in a very short space of time, or it might have taken a remarkably long period. I do not believe that it was lost from this harbor, as it would be practically impossible for such a craft to get out of the bay and straits undetected. I am inclined to the opinion that it was carried from somewhere on the lower coast, perhaps from San Pedro or San Diego, and I am in hopes that the publication of its discovery may lead to its identification."

The trip of the barge is interesting in another direction besides arousing simple curiosity. The currents of the Pacific are being made the subject of scientific study, and the drifting barge adds fresh data to that already known.

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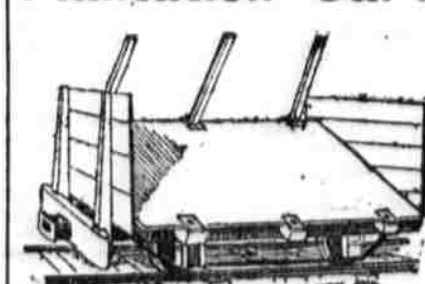
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